

Over-the-counter medications pose special risks for kids

These common childhood maladies — fevers, a runny nose or maybe just an upset tummy — used to require a trip to the pediatrician, a prescription and perhaps a few follow-up appointments, but the demands of today's "cure it NOW!" parents has made thousands of pills and liquid Over-the-Counter drugs, from acetaminophen, antihistamines or antacids in child-

size OTC packaging, easily available to help kids feel better.

Unfortunately, too much of a good thing could be harmful to children.

"Incorrect dosing of medication by a caregiver to a child less than six is involved in more than 1,300 calls per year to our Poison Control Center," says Susan Smolinske, Pharm.

■ **'Kids are not small adults. Just a few incorrect dosages can cause a major medical problem.'**

— Susan Smolinske

Children's Hospital of Michigan Regional Poison Control Center

D., managing director of Children's Hospital of Michigan's Regional Poison Control Center.

She points out that only 30

percent of caregivers understand how to use OTC medications properly, according to a study published in the American Medical Association's Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine.

Incorrect dosing includes poor measurement and inaccurate labeling. Many parents reuse droppers or "eyeball" the amount of medicine. While this may be less harmful to adults, children need accurate measurements for every dose.

"Kids are not small adults," says Smolinske. "Just a few incorrect dosages can cause a major medical problem."

For example, if given incorrectly, acetaminophen can cause severe liver damage in children.

Children's Hospital of Michigan Regional Poison Control Center suggests these guidelines to help caregivers avoid dosing errors:

■ Do not use a household teaspoon or utensils to deliver medications. A household spoon can hold as much as 10 milliliters or as little as 2.5 milliliters.

■ If the product is dosed in teaspoon or milliliter amounts, the most accurate dosing is accomplished with a pediatric syringe. If not available, use a calibrated pediatric dosing spoon. Both are available at most pharmacies.

■ If medication is packaged with a dropper, use the dropper provided. Do not use a teaspoon or a dropper from another medication.

■ Dosing cups packaged with some medications can be misleading. Discard any old cups and read the markings carefully to make sure the correct amount is dispensed.

■ Never give an adult formulation to an infant or child. Never give a product labeled for an older child to an infant or newborn. Use products labeled specifically for the age of the child.

■ Don't play doctor. Twice the dose is not appropriate just because your child seems twice as sick or twice as big/tall as a "normal" child his or her age.

■ Use a calendar to keep track of each dose given. Many dosing errors occur when two caregivers fail to communicate about administering medication to their child.

■ Do not give more than one product at a time — especially those containing acetaminophen. Read ingredient labels carefully for cough, cold, flu and pain products, many will contain acetaminophen.

■ Heed the "Keep Out of Reach" warning. Today's medicines are often flavored — all the more reason to store all drugs out of reach.

■ If you have given an incorrect dose call the Poison Control Center: 1-800-POISON-1.

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Israeli dancers move to fight cancer

An elite dance troupe of Israeli children who mix the individual athleticism of gymnastics with the beauty and theatrics of precision dancing, will perform in Detroit in November to support tobacco prevention programs for American children.

The Tnuatron Dance Theater (*Tnuatron* is a play on the Hebrew words for joy, movement and theater) performs at 4 p.m., Sunday, November 16 at the State Theater on Woodward Avenue in Detroit, in a benefit for the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute's Hazards of Tobacco program.

Student exchange

The contemporary dance troupe, made up of primary, junior high and high school students, is touring the Midwest as part of the Mid East/West Fest, an international community exchange program.

Detroit sponsors include the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan, Hudson's and NBD Bank.

Tickets for the performance are \$50 for patrons; \$35 for donors; \$25 for main floor cabaret seating; and \$10-\$20 for general admission. Patron and donor tickets include preferred seating.

The Karmanos Institute's HOT program uses smoking-related cancer survivors to deliver the message of tobacco prevention, which reached 20,000 Detroit-area students in 1996.

For ticket or general information, call (800) 527-6266.